

Heal Zimbabwe

12 June 2020

lockdown update

Introduction

On the 19th of April, Zimbabwe extended its lockdown with 14 days as a way of escalating measures of reducing the spread of COVID-19. The country's extension illustrates the government's commitment towards effectively containing the virus in the country. The current partial lockdown relaxed restrictions on mining companies, agricultural and food producers, among others as a way of ensuring constant supply of revenue to the government and food. The government also rolled out social assistance programs for vulnerable households including the elderly, vendors and People with Disabilities as a way of reinforcing the lockdown extension. The government's Task Force on COVID-19 also intensified its outreach activities to establish district and provincial isolation centres for cases of COVID-19 across the country.

Issues covered in this Update

In this report, Heal Zimbabwe's Early Warning and Early Response Situation Room provides an update on: how communities are responding to the extended lockdown, availability and cost of face masks, the conduct of lockdown enforcement officers, the availability and quality of health care services for COVID-19, and the availability of information on COVID-19 in local communities. This edition also collected community's positions and thinking about the public outreach meetings on constitutional amendments set for the 15th of June to the 19th of the same month.

Methodology

A total of 4 000 trained Early Warning and Early Response Committee members and at least 5 000 community members who participate in HZT's outreach activities, CBOs operating in areas where Heal Zimbabwe operates and Heal Zimbabwe's Peace Clubs provides and verify information in this update.

Presentation of Updates

Masvingo Province

Chivi

On 8 June, CARE International distributed buckets, soap, pads and sanitizers at Madzivire Primary School in Ward 25. The local Councilor had instructed that each of the 24 Village Heads to shortlist 6 people for the aid. However, only 17 people received the aid. However, most beneficiaries were village heads. Each of the 17 got 2 buckets, 1 bar soap, 1 packet of sanitary pads and a hand sanitizer. Councilor Jacob Magando was responsible for the distribution. Other remaining donations were taken to the Councilor's shop and when asked he highlighted that they were

to be distributed somewhere. Health personnel were present at the distribution maintaining social distancing although they had difficulties ensuring that people adhere to social distancing. Community members in Ward 25 and Ward 26 were not aware of the proposed constitutional amendments and that the Parliament will be conducting public hearings from the 15th to the 19th of June on the proposed amendments. Community members highlighted that government was supposed to ensure that such consultative meetings are conducted at Ward level, since most people will not be able to travel to Masvingo due to lack of money and the restrictive travel related lockdown terms.

Bikita

Community members from Ward 12, Ward 32, Ward 10 and Ward 20 have resumed with their normal daily lives. Member of Parliament, Mr. Elias Musakwa convened a meeting in Ward 9, at the Ward centre on the 8th of June. The meeting was mainly attended by ZANU PF supporters. The MP distributed rice to the people who attended the meeting, giving each of them 2kg of rice per person. There was no social distancing at the meeting and a majority of people were not wearing masks. On the 10th of June, Mr Malvin Mangwayana of Ward 9 coordinated soccer tournament and these have been conducted everyday. Participants in these tourneys are not observing social distancing and most of them do not wear masks at these games. The games have been attracting hundreds of community members. Community members from the five ward were not aware of the proposed constitutional amendments. Most of them highlighted that they once heard early this year that there were proposed constitutional amendments but were not aware of the exact amendments. Community members were also not aware of the dates that the public outreach meetings were going to be held in Masvingo. They further expressed concern over the fact that a majority of people were incapacitated by the economic hardships and restrictive lockdown terms on travelling to the extent that most of them will not be able to actively participate during the hearings.

Gutu

A lot of community members from Ward 6, Ward 5, Ward 7, Ward 31, and Ward 41 have resumed moving around as if everything was normal. On the 9th of June, there were a lot of people at Mupandawana Growth Point. Local police officers have not been strict on enforcing the lockdown. Most people are no longer wearing their masks and vendors are now doing their businesses moving around the growth point as well as in the villages. Most community members in Gutu from the 5 Wards were not aware of the proposed constitutional amendments. Some of the community members highlighted that they received messages on public hearings, stating that the messages lacked details on where these will be held and what were in the proposed amendments. Those who knew about the amendments highlighted that there was no need for Zimbabwe to amend its constitution since it has not fully implemented it. They further stated that the current travel restrictions were going to limit the number of people who will participate in the hearings to those who reside in urban areas, where the hearings will be conducted.

Zaka

In Ward 13, Ward 18, Ward 19 and Ward 24 community members were moving around, wearing masks only when one is at the local shopping centres. Community members were gathering in huge numbers at community boreholes, without observing social distancing or even wearing masks. On the 10th of June, police were dispersing people who were waiting for transport along the Chiredzi – Roy highway. Some people were running away leaving their luggage behind. Most of the community members in the four wards were not aware of the proposed constitutional amendments and the Parliamentary Public Outreach Meetings scheduled for next week. A few people who were aware indicated that they are not in support of the amendments, let alone the fact that the outreaches will be done at a time when the country is grappling with COVID-19 pandemic. They also highlighted that most of them will not be able to attend the hearings due to travel restrictions and lack of bus fares to travel to Masvingo where the hearings will be done.

Chiredzi

Residents from high density suburbs in Chiredzi were moving around and going about their business as usual. Through out the week, local police officers were peacefully enforcing the lockdown and ensuring that community members wear masks in public places. Most community members in Chiredzi highlighted that they felt the government did not give them sufficient notice to prepare for the constitutional amendments public hearing meetings. They also cited fear of causing an increase in local transmission of COVID-19, stating that Masvingo as a province has a lot of people who returned from South Africa through undesignated border entry points. These may put the risk of other people attending the hearings.

Masvingo

Residents from across Masvingo urban have resumed their normal daily movements. On 11 June, twelve cases tested positive for COVID-19, pushing the figure of confirmed cases in the province to 41. A number of Great Zimbabwe University students were also seen walking to their campus in Masvingo Industrial Area, as they resume lectures on the 8th of June. Residents in Masvingo indicated that they were not impressed with the decision to hold public consultative meetings during COVID-19 lockdown. Community members indicated that people were not safe to come to one place given the increase in the number of people confirmed positive on COVID-19 in the province.

Manicaland Province

Mutasa

Community members in Ward 20, Ward 31, Ward 5 and Ward 21 were roaming around wearing masks. Police officers in at Hauna Growth Point continue to ensure that people comply with the lockdown terms. Community members had no idea of the proposed amendments to the constitution. They highlighted that they had not received any awareness from the government or civil society organizations on the proposed amendments.

Buhera

Community members in Ward 5 and Ward 33 were roaming around wearing masks. A group of police officers were seen at around 08:00 hours at Birchenough Bridge and Jagers shopping centres turning away those who did not have masks. Community members from the two wards highlighted that they were only hearing that there are efforts to amend the constitution. They indicated that they were not informed of the proposed amendments and felt that people were ambushed and will not meaningfully input into the public hearings.

Chipinge

Community members in Ward 16 were roaming around without masks. However, in Ward 1 and Ward 3, community members continue to wear their masks in public places. GOAL distributed food aid on 11 June in Ward 3 and beneficiaries were observing social distancing. Community members in the two wards were not aware that there were public consultative meetives on constitutional amendments. They also highlighted that they were not even sure how they were going to input to the process given that their movement is restricted by the current ban on public transport. Community members also expressed concern over the fact that the meetings may not be well representative since a lot of people had depleted their savings due to the lockdown and were not in a position to raise their bus fares to Mutare (at least 123km away) or Masvingo (about 140 km away).

Chimanimani

Community members in Ward 8 were roaming around wearing masks. A group of police officers were seen at around 12:30 hours enforcing the lockdown. Community members from Ward 8 indicated that they were not aware of the proposed constitutional amendments, the dates and venue for the consultative meetings on the proposed amendments. Only a few people indicated that there was no point the government wanted to amend the constitution. The current constitution has not been fully implemented and people in the Ward were still looking forward to its full implementation.

Makoni

Community members in Ward 15 and Ward 16 were roaming around wearing masks. People have resumed their normal daily businesses in the two wards. A group of police officers were seen around 09:00 hours turning away those who did not have masks. Most community members in the two wards indicated that they had not been sufficiently educated on the proposed amendments. They also expressed concern over the fact that the two wards were not serviced by a ZUPCO and hence they will not be able to attend the public hearings. They also suggested that the government should have ensured that such meetings are done at the local community level to reduce the size of gatherings.

Matabeleland North Province

Lupane

Community members from around Lupane Centre continue to avoid public spaces in fear of contracting the COVID-19 virus. At residential places there was remarkable quietness and empty streets with children playing in their yards. However, community boreholes and water points remain risky places as citizens have limited options to protect themselves. There are no disinfectants at local water points to use before and after using the borehole. Community members are also failing to observe social distancing at boreholes. Community members from across the district highlighted that although they had received awareness from political activists and civic groups about the proposed amendments but highlighted that government had not given them sufficient time to prepare for the public hearings. Most of the people were also questioning the timing of the need to collect public's opinion on the constitutional amendments. Community members were stating that this process could be suspended until the country is sure that it has effectively curbed the transmission of COVID-19 and measures of testing and isolating COVID-19 cases during the hearings will be in place.

Mashonaland East Province

Murehwa

Community members from around Murehwa highlighted that there was an increase in crime rate, both at the shopping centre and within villages. Only a few people around Murehwa Centre are still wearing masks in public places. Prices for basic commodities such as mealie-meal, cooking oil and sugar have gone up significantly. Community members were also concerned that there is a sudden increase in cattle mysteriously dying. Community members from Murehwa centre were not clear on the proposed constitutional amendments. Most of the people who demonstrated knowledge of the proposed amendments highlighted that they feared poor citizen participation given the fact that people are not allowed to meet to discuss the amendments due to the current lockdown terms. They also highlighted that most of the people who participated in the constitution making process were in the rural areas and they will not be able to participate in the hearings scheduled for next week.